

Cemetery, which can be seen on a short hike along the Pioneer Cemetery Trail.

Isaac Ray, an early pioneer, established a homestead near the Falls, and was the first to acquire property ownership (as we know it) of the Falls. He built a lumber mill in the meadow above the Falls, but it proved unprofitable, and he didn't stay. Samuel Burney, another early settler, is the namesake of a local town and the spectacular waterfall.

The area remained remote well into the 20th century, due to slow and difficult access. Early in the 1900s, the Pit River and some of its water-abundant tributaries were tapped for hydroelectric power. The Pit Three Dam, forming Lake Britton, was completed in 1925. The lake inundated Peck's Bridge and ultimately became an important recreational attraction.

Frank McArthur, a member of the prosperous cattle ranching McArthur family of the nearby Fall River Valley, became concerned that Burney Falls might also be developed for power generation. He therefore purchased 160 acres of land surrounding the Falls and presented it in 1920 as a gift to the people of California "as a park for the use of the public." The gift was accepted in 1922, and Burney Falls became one of California's earliest State Parks. McArthur made the gift in memory of his pioneer Scottish immigrant parents, John and Catherine McArthur, hence resulting in the name, McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park.

Many of the Park's facilities, including some of the stone campground stoves and the Falls Trail, were originally built by the work-hungry young men of the Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC had a busy camp here in 1934. Further Park development, acquisition of new properties (especially the Lake Britton shoreline), improved roads, and, most importantly, the park's scenic renown, have all made McArthur-Burney Falls a busy and popular destination.

About Your Visit

McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park is open all year, but is most heavily visited in the summer. Recently, more visitors are choosing to visit during the less-crowded Spring and Fall seasons. The park has much to offer. A hurried visitor can get an inspiring glimpse of the falls in a few minutes. Families will also find plenty of activities to fill a two-week vacation at the park.

Trails offer a chance to experience the Burney Creek Canyon, the mist of the falls, the headwaters, and the Pioneer Cemetery. For access to Lake Britton, there is a boat launch ramp, complete with a loading dock. The lake is popular for touring, waterskiing, sailing, and fishing. During the summer, a concession store and a small boat rental marina are open; rentals include outboard boats, paddleboats, and canoes. A sandy swimming beach is maintained at the lake; however, no lifeguard service is provided. For those who love fishing, Burney Creek offers good trout fishing and Lake Britton has smallmouth bass and crappie, among other species.

Picnic areas near the falls and the lake are available for use without reservations. There are also 128 campsites in the pine oak forest on the plateau above Burney Creek. The campground includes individual tables, fire stoves, nearby water faucets, and restrooms with hot showers. Several campsites are kept open all year, though snow sometimes hinders access in mid-winter.

The Pacific Crest Trail, extending from Canada to Mexico, passes through the park. Long-distance hikers often begin or end their journeys here.

Camping Reservations

During the summer, all campsites can be reserved, and the campground is full every night. Reservations for all State Park campsites are made by the current reservation contractor for California State Parks. To obtain information on reservations, contact the park by phone or mail.

**McArthur-Burney Falls
Memorial State Park
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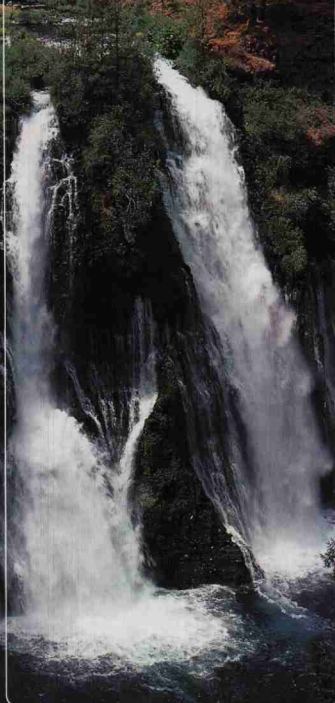
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McARTHUR- BURNIE FALLS Memorial State Park



President Theodore Roosevelt once called Burney Falls the eighth wonder of the world. This spectacular cascading waterfall within McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park is well worth a visit. The entire park and the uncrowded countryside around it are filled with natural and historic features that are apt to make your visit memorable. The park is located in the beautiful evergreen forests of the Pit River country in northeastern California. Fast-running streams of pure, cold water make for great fishing, and the recently-formed volcanic landscape is full of wonders. Halfway between Mount Shasta and Lassen Peak, the park is near the edge of the Modoc Plateau.

McArthur-Burney is especially popular from May until late September, when the days are usually warm and sunny and the nights remain pleasantly cool, because of the park's three thousand-foot elevation. Facilities include a developed campground with showers (no hookups), two picnic areas, and approximately five miles of trail. Burney Creek runs through the forested 875-acre park, which also includes some two miles of frontage on Lake Britton, a long, narrow reservoir in the scenic Pit River Canyon. Visitors enjoy swimming, fishing, boating, and waterskiing.



The Falls

Burney Falls is not the highest nor largest waterfall in the state, but many people consider it the most beautiful. Unlike other waterfalls in this area or elsewhere, Burney Falls continues to flow at the same rate all year long — about 100 million gallons daily. The strikingly clear, pure water flows from openings in the volcanic rock at and above the falls. The water temperature, even on hot summer days, is about 42 degrees Fahrenheit. The 129-foot-high waterfall cascades into an almost iridescent pool underneath. Light penetrates deep into the clear water, reflecting a cool blue color.

Any season is ideal for viewing the falls, which are easily accessible from the parking area. In autumn, the water reflects splashes of red and yellow from the leaves of surrounding oak trees. Subfreezing mid-winter mornings often reveal festoons of icicles on the cliff face.

The surrounding landscape is mostly dry in the summer. So where does all the spring water for Burney Falls come from? The answer lies hidden in the rock. Beneath most of the park and surrounding countryside lies dark volcanic rock, called basalt. In its molten form, this rock did not flow from Mount Shasta, Lassen, or any other mountain top. Instead, it sprang from large cracks in the ground. About one million years ago, the molten basalt spread out in layers over the ground, then cooled and hardened. As lava cools into basalt rock, gas bubbles form inside the rock, in much the same way they do inside yeast-filled bread dough. The gas bubbles break, leaving a porous rock that allows water to pass through it.

Today, the layers of basalt work like a massive sponge, absorbing enormous amounts of snowmelt and rain. The layers are exposed in Burney Creek Canyon, where gravity releases the water at a constant rate (100 million gallons per day). When you visit the falls, notice how the water pours out of the face of the cliff, or walk upstream on the Headwaters Trail, to see the creek emerging from the rock.

Other Natural History

McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park lies within a volcanic wonderland. Every mountain in the area erupted from underground magma. As you view the landscape, you are seeing the result of the pieces of earth's crust shifting and bumping together. Most of the mountains are now inactive, but one, Lassen Peak, is geologically still alive. It was the last volcano in California to erupt (1914-1920), and it will probably erupt again. Overall, the area is at the southern end of the long North American chain of volcanoes known as the Cascades.

Under the volcanic rock, and exposed in several places in and around the park, lies a soft white substance resembling blackboard chalk. Compared to the fiery origin of the surrounding rock, this substance almost seems out of place. It is diatomaceous earth, formed almost entirely from microscopic plants that sank to the floor of an ancient sea. In this area, layers of diatomaceous earth can be 100 feet thick. You can get close to a good exposure of it on the Burney Creek Trail. Because the water in the overlying basalt does not penetrate the diatomaceous earth very well, it is forced to squeeze out in exposed places, such as the springs at Burney Falls.

Ponderosa pine flourish in the park and surrounding forest. Where soil moisture is plentiful, especially near Burney Creek, majestic Douglas fir trees abound. Sprinkled among the pines, white oaks and black oaks provide acorns that nourish birds and small animals, like squirrels. In late spring and early summer, the park blooms with wildflowers. And in the summer, the forest

offers cool shade to visitors and wildlife alike. Autumn brings a colorful display, as oak leaves turn shades of gold and red.

McArthur-Burney Falls Memorial State Park has been selected as one of the viewing sites for the California Watchable Wildlife program. To understand why, watch the face of the falls carefully in early summer, and you may see small dark birds with boomerang-shaped wings flitting in and out amidst the cascading water. These are migratory black swifts flying about their nests on the rock cliff. Also, the endangered bald eagle, now making a population comeback, is frequently sighted around Lake Britton. In fact, the lake is one of the most populous nesting sites for this eagle, our national bird.

When you visit the park, you may see mammals like mule deer and squirrels. The California ground squirrel, a true hibernator during the winter, nests underground, but actively forages above ground by day. The frisky Douglas squirrel and the bushy-tailed gray squirrel are active all year and spend most of their time in the trees.

The striped skunk is one mammal that campers see all too frequently. Active at night, this predator has learned to search for scraps and garbage left by visitors. A clean campsite is the best assurance against their unwanted visits. If a skunk comes near you or your family, remain calm and move slowly; they will only spray if they feel threatened.

History of the Area

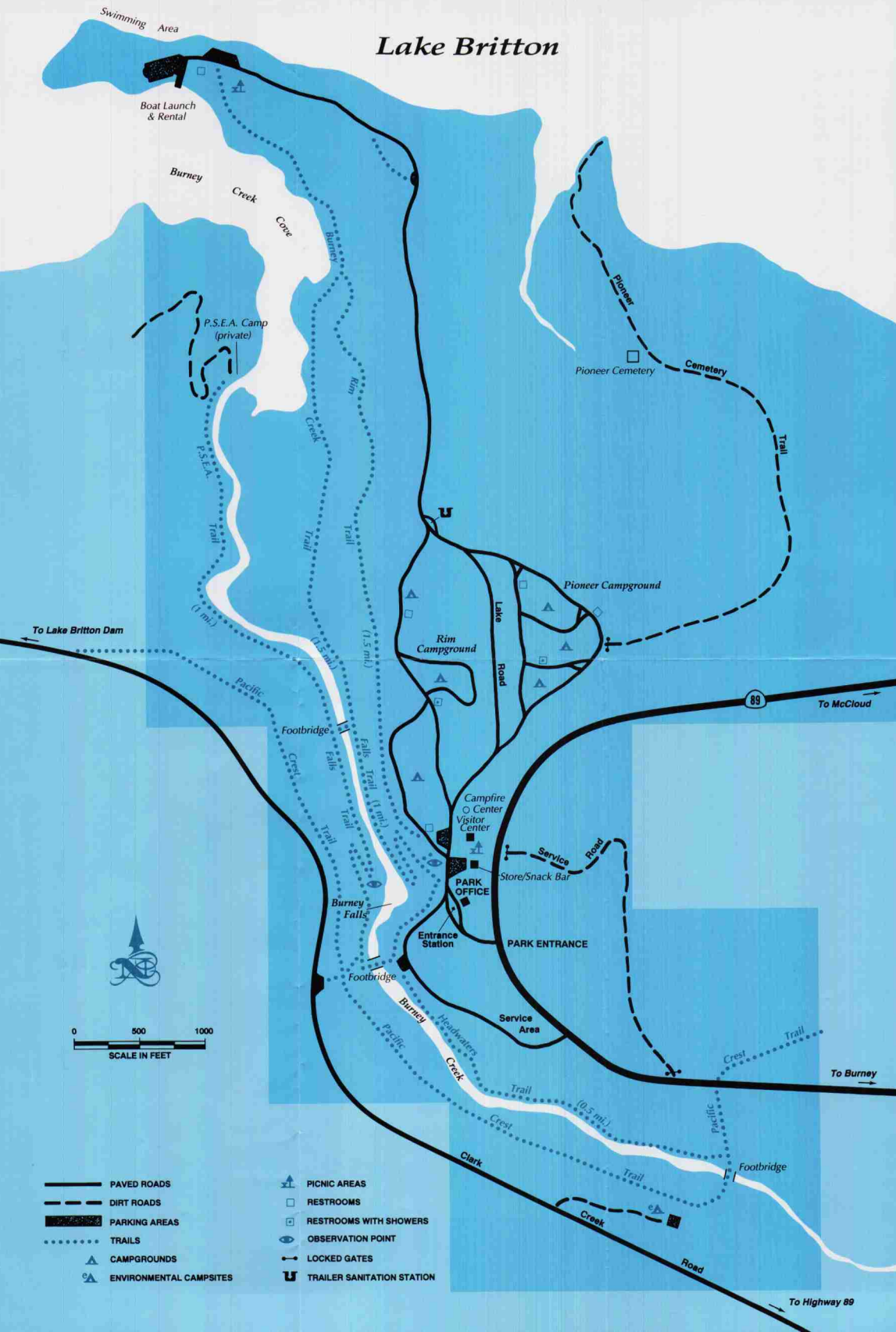
The earliest known human residents of this area were the Ilmawi — one of several groups of Native Americans in northeastern California who dug deep pits to trap big game. The first white explorers and settlers therefore referred to these people as Pit River Indians.

The Ilmawi maintained semi-permanent villages in the vicinity of the park. They believed that anything of great size or beauty, such as a mountain, possessed great power. Burney Falls was therefore looked upon as a sacred place — a place for visions and meditation. As such, it was shared by the various nearby tribes, including the Ajuumawi and the Atsugewi, who often camped on the upper sections of Burney Creek.

Few features or objects left by the Ilmawi remain in the park. However, any items found, including obsidian chips or arrowheads, are fully protected by law, and are to be left where found. Also, common sense and human respect require that visitors not disturb any historic or prehistoric site.

The first people of European descent to enter this area were fur trappers who came during the 1830s, followed by emigrants bound for farms in the 1840s. One such emigrant, Pierson Barton Reading, first "discovered" Burney Falls, and described them in his diary in 1843. Reading went on to become one of Shasta County's leading citizens. Later in the 19th century, several small farms were established along the Pit River near Burney Falls, and the settlement of Peck's Bridge sprang up. Some of Peck's early inhabitants are buried at the Pioneer

Lake Britton



- PAVED ROADS
- DIRT ROADS
- PARKING AREAS
- TRAILS

- CAMPGROUNDS
- ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPSITES

- PICNIC AREAS
- RESTROOMS
- RESTROOMS WITH SHOWERS
- OBSERVATION POINT
- LOCKED GATES
- TRAILER SANITATION STATION